

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 TRSE-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01  
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /084 W  
-----111809 142100Z /73

R 131348Z SEP 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1551  
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMCONSUL MUNICH  
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
USMISSION USNATO  
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 6434

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, RO  
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON RELIGIOUS DISSIDENTS

REF: BUCHAREST 3363

1. SUMMARY. IN LENGTHY CONVERSATION SEPTEMBER 13, FREQUENT EMBASSY VISITORS PAVEL NICULESCU AND AUREL POPESCU (PROTECT BOTH), LEADERS OF DISSIDENT ELEMENTS IN BAPTIST AND PENTECOSTAL DENOMINATIONS RESPECTIVELY, PROVIDED US WITH CURRENT REPORT ON PROBLEMS OF NEO-PROTESTANT NON-CONFORMISTS. INCIDENTS THEY DESCRIBED ILLUSTRATE GOR'S CONTINUING TACTICS OF HARASSMENT, BUT SHORT OF POINT WHERE CASES COULD BECOME SEVERE PUBLIC EMBARRASSMENT FOR GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. ON WEEKEND TRIP TO PROVINCES TO DISCUSS SITUATION OF  
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SOME CO-RELIGIONISTS, NICULESCU WAS DETAINED BY POLICE FOR EIGHTEEN HOURS SEPTEMBER 3-4 IN TOWN OF AIUD, ALBA JUDET. HE CLAIMS NOT TO HAVE BEEN MISTREATED PHYSICALLY IN ANY WAY, BUT HE WAS QUESTIONED INTENSELY ON PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP, WHOM HE SAW, AND WHERE HE WENT. HE ALLEGEDLY REPLIED THAT POLICE SHOULD ALREADY HAVE THAT INFORMATION SINCE HE WAS UNDER INTENSE SURVEILLANCE FROM TIME HE

LEFT BUCHAREST. HE WAS RELEASED MORNING SEPTEMBER 4 AND RETURNED TO CAPITAL WITHOUT PROBLEMS. THIS INCIDENT WAS ALLEGEDLY BROADCAST ON RFE SEPTEMBER 12.

3. ALL MEMBERS OF NICULESCU'S "COMMITTEE TO DEFEND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN ROMANIA" (REFTEL) WERE FORMALLY EXPELLED FROM BAPTIST DENOMINATION AUGUST 30 BY NATIONAL BAPTIST LEADERSHIP. VOTE WAS ALLEGEDLY 4-2 FOR EXPULSION, WITH BAPTIST COMMUNITIES OF BUCHAREST AND ORADEA OPPOSING. NEVERTHELESS, LARGE BUCHAREST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MIHAI BRAVU WITH WHICH NICULESCU HAS INTIMATE LINKS HAS REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE HIS EXPULSION AND STILL CONSIDERS HIM A MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING OF CONGREGATION (ACTUALLY A LAY LEADER, SINCE DEPARTMENT OF CULTS REVOKED HIS LICENSE TO PREACH SOME TIME AGO). NICULESCU COMMENTED THAT ONE POSSIBLE EFFECT OF OFFICIAL EXPULSION IS TO REMOVE ANY OBLIGATION BY NATIONAL BAPTIST LEADERS TO SPEAK IN HIS FAVOR IF HE WERE TO BE ARRESTED OR OTHERWISE MOLESTED BY SECURITY FORCES.

4. NICULESCU AND POPESCU DETAILED A SERIES OF INCIDENTS OF GOR DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BELIEVES, E.G. STUDENTS WHO WERE FAILED IN OBLIGATORY MARXIST-LENINIST COURSES NOT FOR LACK OF COMPREHENSION BUT FOR NOT BELIEVING IN DOCTRINE; FOUR PENTACOSTALS IN VILLAGE OF OSTRA IN SUCEAVA JUDET WHO WERE FIND A TOAL  
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OF TEN THOUSAND LEI FOR HOLDING "UNAUTHORIZED" RELIGIOUS MEETINGS. THEY CLAIM THAT COMMITTEE HAD SENT DOCUMENT TO MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS AGUSUT 31 CITING THESE INCIDENTS, CHARGING THAT SUCH PRACTICES VIOLATE ROMANIAN CONSTITUTION, AND REQUESTING MINISTRY TO ISSUE INSTRUCTIONS TO HAVE THEM STOPPED.

5. THEY REPORTED THAT DISSIDENT ROMANIAN ORTHODOX PRIEST GHEORGHE CALCIU, SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST FROM KESTON COLLEGE AND OTHER ENGLISH GROUPS, HAS NOW BEEN FIRED FROM HIS ADMINISTRATIVE POST IN THE CHURCH. HE WAS REPORTEDLY SUSPENDED BY COUNCIL OF ARCHBISHOPRIC OF BUCHAREST FROM HIS PASTORAL DUTIES IN LATE MAY AFTER A SERIES OF SERMONS IN WHICH HE STRONGLY DENOUNCED POST-EARTHQUAKE DEMOLITION OF ENEI CHURCH, DESCRIBED ATHEISM AS A "PHILOSOPHY OF DESPAIR", AND OPENLY SPOKE ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF THE CHURCH.

6. COMMENT. CONCURRENT WITH THESE INCIDENTS IS ONE OF THE PERIODIC REVIVALS OF ANTI-RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA IN ROMANIAN MEDIA. OFFICIAL RCP DAILY SCINTEIA OF SEPTEMBER 9, FOR EXAMPLE, CARRIED ARTICLE STRONGLY

ATTACKING JEHOVA'S WITNESSES, A NON-RECOGNIZED  
DENOMINATION HERE. INCIDENTS DESCRIBED BY NICULESCU AND  
POPESCU SHOW THAT GOR'S STRATEGY WITH RELIGIOUS  
DISSIDENTS REMAINS UNCHANGED--HARASSMENT AND IN SOME  
CASES PERSONAL HARDSHIP FOR DISSIDENTS BUT NOT TO  
POINT WHERE THEIR CASES WOULD BE LIKELY TO BECOME  
WIDELY PUBLICIZED AND ENGENDER ACUTE EMBARRASSMENT  
FOR GOVERNMENT.  
AGGREY

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## Message Attributes

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